

Sigmund Pollitzer

1859-1937

The death of Sigmund Pollitzer, on the morning of November 1, 1937, represents an irreparable loss to his colleagues and to American dermatology.

It is fitting that this new Journal should honor the memory of Pollitzer in its first pages, not only because he was one of the leaders and inspirations in the founding of the Society for Investigative Dermatology and of the Journal, but also because his passing terminates a life of constant and faithful devotion to the highest ideals of medicine.

The many accomplishments of Sigmund Pollitzer are too well known to be recalled here. His fundamental, original studies clarifying the subject of acanthosis nigricans, of tuberculids, of parapsoriasis, and of many other dermatologic entities; his contributions to dermatologic and venereologic therapeutics, including the "intensive method" and the universally accepted Pollitzer plaster; and his devoted service as teacher and as organizer have received their well-deserved recognition. He served as President of the American Dermatological Association (1914-1915), as Professor of Dermatology at the New York Post Graduate Medical School and Hospital (1908-1915), and, to the time of his death, as Consultant at the Lenox Hill Hospital and at Beth Israel Hospital, New York City.

The Darier-Pollitzer treatise on dermatology was hailed as the most useful textbook of its day, and is still one of the finest treatises on dermatology in the English language.

Outside the field of dermatology, Pollitzer distinguished himself by his lifelong, unselfish service to the College of the City of New York, and to its Student Aid Association, of which he was trustee. He was Major in the Medical Corps, attached to the Surgeon General's office, during the World War.

However, no bare recording of these and many other accomplishments and honors can do justice to the memory of Sigmund Pollitzer. For the essence of his greatness and of his personality lay in his unswerving and uncompromising devotion to the ethics and truth at the basis of all science. All who heard him speak recognized the selflessness of this devotion and the fearlessness with which he expressed his convictions. He was always the scientist; never the politician. And to the very day of his death, even in the fading hours of his last illness, he never lost his enthusiasm and his love for the cause of medicine. So vital and youthful was his outlook to the very end, that we who came to him for his ever ready counsel and assistance were encouraged and inspired by his example.

In the preservation of this perennially youthful spirit, and in Pollitzer's entire career, the constant love and understanding of his wife played an integral part, and her devotion and companionship were an unfailing inspiration.

All who attended the opening meeting of our Society in Atlantic City last June were privileged to see Pollitzer in one of the very last of his activities in the cause of dermatology. His chairmanship at the inauguration of a new endeavor was characteristic of his spirit of progress. And no more fitting tribute can be brought than for us to carry on the work as he would have wished to see it done.